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AMERICAN VAMPIRE



VERTIGO

SCOTT
SNYDER

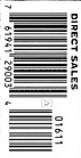
RAFAEL
ALBUQUERQUE

EISNER
AWARD
NOMINATION:
BEST
NEW
SERIES

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16 Aug '11

Suggested for
mature readers
vertigo.com/11



THERE'S A SAYING IN MUSIC THAT I USED TO HEAR ON THE ROAD A LOT. THE OLD GUYS WOULD SAY IT, THE ROAD DOGS. THEY'D SAY THAT TO BE GOOD--REALLY GOOD--A MAN HAD TO "KNOW HOW TO COURT DEATH."

I WAS BARELY A KID WHEN I FIRST HEARD THE EXPRESSION--COURT DEATH. AND BACK THEN, I JUST FIGURED IT MEANT YOU HAD TO BE A WILD MAN. LIVE ON THE EDGE.

BUT I'M OLDER NOW, WISER, AND I'VE COME TO BELIEVE THAT WHAT THE OLD GUYS MEANT--WHAT THEY KNEW--WAS THAT TO PLAY YOUR BEST, YOU HAVE TO BE FEARLESS.

YOU HAVE TO PLAY LIKE YOU'RE PLAYING YOUR LAST GIG. EVERY TIME. PLAY LIKE DEATH IS AT YOUR SIDE, HER COLD CHIN ON YOUR SHOULDER, BECAUSE SHE'S EXACTLY THE GIRL YOU'RE TRYING TO TAKE HOME.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I PLAYED ON THE ROAD, BUT I'VE LEARNED THAT THERE ARE OTHER TIMES THIS SAYING WORKS, TOO.

IN WAR...

IN LOVE...

AND AT TIMES LIKE THIS... WHEN YOU KNOW YOU'VE REACHED THE END.



ALL YOU CAN DO TO
STAY SANE IS SMILE,
AND BLOW DEATH A
KISS.

THE PLACE WAS CALLED
UNIT 732. AT FIRST GLANCE,
IT SEEMED LIKE SOME KIND
OF PRISON CAMP.

BUT FROM THE START, WE
KNEW IT WAS SOMETHING
WORSE. THE LAB COATS.
THE STRANGE PIT AT THE
CENTER OF THE FACILITY...

WHERE WE WERE ON
TAIPAN, OR HOW WE HAD
GOTTEN THERE, *NONE*
OF US KNEW.



AFTER ALL, WE
WERE MEMBERS
OF A COVERT
TEAM DEVOTED TO
KILLING VAMPIRES,
AND EVERY ONE
OF US WAS READY
FOR A FIGHT...

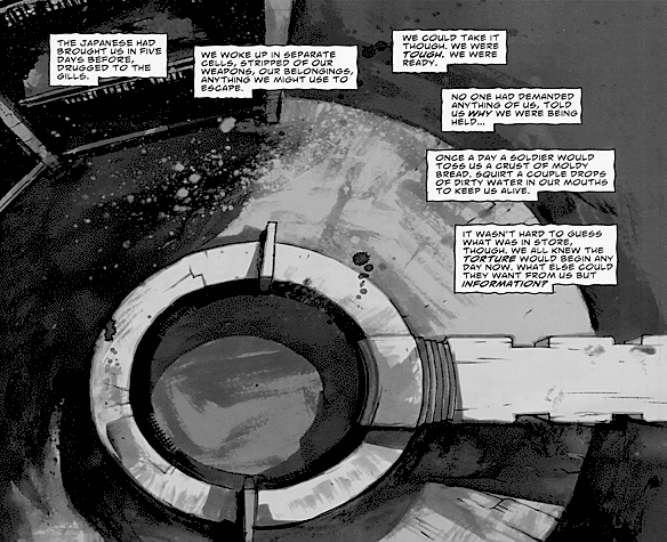


VICAR ROW,
OUR LEADER...



CALVIN POOLE, OUR
TAXONOMIST...

SAM LANTS,
OUR WEAPONS
SPECIALIST.



THE JAPANESE HAD
BROUGHT US IN FIVE
DAYS BEFORE,
DRUGGED TO THE
GILLS.

WE WOKE UP IN SEPARATE
CELLS, STRIPPED OF OUR
WEAPONS, OUR BELONGINGS,
ANYTHING WE MIGHT USE TO
ESCAPE.

WE COULD TAKE IT
THOUGH. WE WERE
TOUGH. WE WERE
READY.

NO ONE HAD DEMANDED
ANYTHING OF US, TOLD
US WHY WE WERE BEING
HELD...

ONCE A DAY A SOLDIER WOULD
TOSS US A CRUST OF MOLDY
BREAD, SQUIRT A COUPLE DROPS
OF DIRTY WATER IN OUR MOUTHS
TO KEEP US ALIVE.

IT WASN'T HARD TO GUESS
WHAT WAS IN STORE,
THOUGH. WE ALL KNEW THE
TORTURE WOULD BEGIN ANY
DAY NOW. WHAT ELSE COULD
THEY WANT FROM US BUT
INFORMATION?

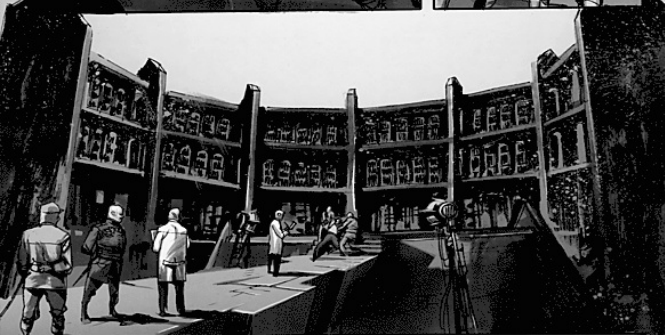


AND ME.



WHATEVER WAS
COMING, WE
WERE PREPARED
FOR IT...

— Mac Miller









THAT WAS WHEN
WE UNDERSTOOD.

THEY HADN'T
BROUGHT US
TO THIS PLACE
TO TORTURE
US, OR GET
INFORMATION...

"...BUT FOR
SOMETHING
WORSE."

WELCOME
TO TAIWAN,
LADIES.



AS YOU CAN SEE,
WE'VE SECURED THE WHOLE
SOUTH END OF THE ISLAND.
THE INFIRMARY IS THERE, IN THAT
CLUSTER OF TENTS, AND IT'S
PACKED TO A GUN.

I FIGURE WE'LL
USE SIX OF YOU IN
ONE TENT, AND
SIX...



WAIT A
MINUTE...



"WEREN'T
THERE JUST
TWELVE OF
YOU?"



WHERE
ARE YOU,
BABY?



WHERE--



CLIC





"PEOPLE WERE ALWAYS UNDERESTIMATING HIM, BECAUSE HE LOOKED UNIMPOSING."

"BUT TRUTH BE TOLD, HE WAS ONE OF THE TOUGHEST GUNS OF BITCHES I EVER MET."

"THE MAN COULD GO TOE TO TOE WITH THE BEST OF THEM..."

HELLO, BOYS...



"...BUT SAM WAS TOUGH IN A DEEPER WAY, TOO. HE HAD FORTITUDE, YOU KNOW?"

WHEN SAM'S FAMILY FIRST CAME TO THE U.S., WHEN HE WAS A LITTLE BOY, THE IMMIGRATION OFFICERS THOUGHT IT'D BE FUNNY TO GIVE HIS FAMILY THE LAST NAME LANTS.



THEN GIVE EVERYONE FIRST NAMES THAT STARTED WITH "S." SO EVERYONE WOULD BE S. LANTS. "SLANTS."

FUNNY THING ABOUT SAM, HE COULDN'T HAVE CHANGED HIS NAME ANY TIME, BUT HE KEPT IT. HE WAS PROUD OF IT.



HE WAS A COP, IN SAN FRANCISCO'S CHINATOWN DISTRICT. THE VAMPIRES IN THAT CITY, THEY USED TO PREY ON THE CHINESE IMMIGRANTS ALL THE TIME. WHO'D REPORT ANYTHING, YOU KNOW?



SAM, HE GOT TOO CLOSE, AND THEY... THEY KILLED HIS FAMILY. THAT'S WHEN HE JOINED UP.



HE DIDN'T DESERVE THIS.



NO ONE DESERVES THIS.



I THINK I MIGHT KNOW A WAY OUT.



WHAT ARE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT, HENRY?
WHAT WAY
OUT?



YOU HAVE A WEAPON?
SOMETHING WE CAN
USE AGAINST
THEM?



YES...



WHAT
IS IT?



HMM.



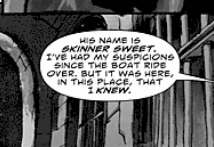
HE'S A
VAMPIRE.



A VAMPIRE?
HENRY, WHAT ARE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT?



YEAH, HANK? COUGH...
THOSE ARE HEAVY
ACCUSATIONS TO LEVEL AT
A MAN COUGHING IN THIS
COMPANY.



HIS NAME IS
SKINNER SWEET.
I'VE HAD MY SUSPICIONS
SINCE THE BOAT RIDE
OVER, BUT IT WAS HERE,
IN THIS PLACE, THAT
I KNEW.



YOU HAVE
PROOF OF
THIS?



HIS HEART.
IT ONLY BEATS
ONCE A MINUTE. I
WAS WATCHING
HIS PULSE WHILE
HE SLEPT.



WELL
AREN'T YOU AN
OBSERVANT
ONE.





THESE VAMPIRES, THE SPECIES ON THIS ISLAND, WHATEVER THEY ARE, THEY CAN HURT YOU, SAME AS US. YOU'RE PRACTICALLY TORN TO PIECES IN THERE. YOU'VE LOST TOO MUCH BLOOD. I DOUBT YOU COULD CHANGE MUCH IF YOU WANTED TO.

IT'S ONLY GOING TO GET WORSE, TOO. DENY IT ALL YOU WANT, BUT ANY MINUTE, YOU'LL COLLAPSE FROM BLOOD LOSS. YOUR BODY WILL GO INTO SHOCK, THEN HIBERNATION. FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, YOU'LL DIE, SKINNER.

NOW I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE HERE, OR WHAT YOU'RE AFTER. MY GUESS IS YOU WERE CLOSING IN ON ME BACK IN HAWAII, WHEN YOU CAUGHT WIND OF THIS MISSION AND, NOT KNOWING THE OBJECTIVE, DECIDED, HELL, WHY NOT TAG ALONG?

YOU'D GET TO KILL ME, AND AS A BONUS, MAYBE GET YOUR HANDS ON SOMETHING VALUABLE TO THE VASSALS, YOUR SWORN ENEMIES.

LIKE I SAID, I DON'T KNOW. AND THE TRUTH IS, I DON'T CARE. BOTTOM LINE: I KNOW ALL TOO WELL WHAT HAPPENS TO PEOPLE WHO MAKE DEALS WITH YOU. IT'S WHY I HAVEN'T CALLED YOU OUT UNTIL NOW.



YOU KNOW ME SO WELL, HANK, THEN WHY SOUNDS WHY TALK DEALS AT ALL?

BECAUSE LIKE I SAID BEFORE, THE VAMPIRES ON THIS ISLAND, THEY CAN HURT YOU, SWEET. KILL YOU.

YOU NEED US TO GET OUT OF HERE, SAME AS WE NEED YOU. WE'RE IN IT TOGETHER, AT LEAST UNTIL WE REACH SAFE GROUND. THEN YOU AND ME, WE CAN HAVE IT OUT.

HESSSSSS



WHAT ARE
YOU GOING TO
DO, HENRY?

I'M GOING TO
GIVE HIM WHAT HE
NEEDS. BLOOD.
MY BLOOD.



BUT...
HE COULD
DRAIN
YOU.



HE COULD. BUT HE
WON'T. BECAUSE LIKE
US, HE WANTS TO GET
THE FUCK OUT OF THIS
HELLHOLE.

SO I'LL GIVE HIM MY
BLOOD. WE'LL GET SOME
STRENGTH BACK. AND THEN
WE'LL GET OUT OF HERE,
TOGETHER.

DEAL?

DEAL,
CHIEF.





EVERY TEST WE'VE RUN
SO FAR HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL.
ONCE WE TEST THE PLASMA
ON THE DARK-SKINNED ONE,
TO MAKE SURE IT WORKS
UNIVERSALLY--

NO MORE
TESTS.



THE
AMERICANS
HAVE TAKEN
THE WHOLE
SOUTH SIDE
OF THE ISLAND.
THE TIME FOR
TESTS HAS
PASSED.

BUT THEY KNOW NOTHING OF
THIS FACILITY. AS FAR AS
THEY'RE CONCERNED, THE BULK
OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY IS
EAST, UP ON THE RIDGE.

WE MOVE THE WEAPON
TONIGHT. LOAD IT WITH THIS
NEWEST BATCH.

EK-B.
YES, SIR.
I'LL GO--



CLANK
CRASH

COME! HURRY!
IF ONE OF THE
PRISONERS TRIED TO
HANG HIMSELF...

WE
NEED THEM...
ALIVE...



GHOST WAR

SCOTT SNYDER RAFAEL ALBUQUERQUE

DAVE MCCAIG PAT BROSSEAU JOE HUGHES MARK DOYLE

AMERICAN VAMPIRE

OPERATION

SNYDER & ALBUQUERQUE



AMERICAN VAMPIRE

MARK DOYLE EDITOR

AMERICAN VAMPIRE #16

Hello, guys and gals,

It's been a busy week here at Vertigo, LOTS of big doings that I'll tell you about later, but trust me when I say that AMERICAN VAMPIRE fans are the luckiest fans in comics because we have some big treats in store for you.

Busy as it's been, time to take a little break and see what you fine folks have to say for yourself...

Dear AMERICAN VAMPIRE,

I've just had the perfect Sunday morning and I wanted to say thanks, Vertigo! AMERICAN VAMPIRE #14 arrived earlier in what has been a manic nonstop week and I've been saving it to enjoy today, my only (and very welcome) day off. And I'm glad I did.

I was tempted in the week to maybe race through it before getting into the office, or reading it at lunchtime, but I wanted to sit back and take my time.

So with a freshly brewed coffee and the apartment to myself, no noise outside from traffic, neighbors or any form of life, I turned the pages and lost myself in what I consider the best damn comic being published today! I read it twice, and as always loved it, and can't wait for the next one to see how this latest chapter unfolds.

If only every day could be an AMERICAN VAMPIRE Sunday!

Time for another coffee. Cheers.

Wil Trainor
Wigan, England

Hey, Wil, thanks a ton for writing! Happy to hear that AMERICAN VAMPIRE has fans across the pond. But I thought you folks drank tea? You better watch out: reading American comics, drinking coffee, they might kick you out of the country. Just kidding, Wil. Thanks again for reading, and really happy to hear we made your morning great!

Dear American Vampire,

That's it. I'm throwing in the towel. I surrender to you, DC/Vertigo, and what, might you ask, has been the cause of this sudden conversion from Marvel (did I hear booing?) to Vertigo? A powerfully dark and thought-provoking, blood-sucking tale, thought up by epic storytellers Scott Snyder and horror godfather Stephen King, thank you very much, AMERICAN VAMPIRE.

I'm no stranger to horror and comics; in fact, my collection of King's books and countless comic books would be proof of that, and let me tell you...if you like dark and graphic with a powerful dash of addictive storytelling, please read AV!! Don't do it for me, do it for yourself. I must warn, you, though: if you are prone to sleep loss and nightmares, this series will do nothing to help you get over those issues whatsoever.

Having the luxury of a few friends who work at comic shops here in Vancouver, I've been able to get my hands on most of the variant covers for AV, and being a major addict of cover art, let me tell you...I HAVE BEEN SPOILED!! Thank you, Rafael Albuquerque, for starting this off with a BANG! I make it a point of taking the comics out on a weekly basis to make sure they are all still there in order (Obsessive?...YES!). From what I understand, it seems that variants will not be printed anymore (true??), and if so, I'm sad to hear that, but also relieved not to have to line up early on Wednesday once a month.

Back to the art, and by no means am I leaving Scott's brilliant writing and storytelling out of this letter for any reason in particular other than that my words cannot do his any justice. He is brilliant. Let's leave it at that. The artwork from page to page draws me in like no other series before it. As I have mentioned before, I am a big collector/reader of all comics, and the last time I was this excited was when Todd McFarlane did the Torment series back in the mid '90s.

I could go on and on, but this is my first ever letter (to a comic book), and I really have no idea how long to make it...

Raf, you will be missed, but the torch has been passed on to no one more deserving than Mateus Santalouco. Scott, you are amazing, and the twists and turns that you bring in AV keep us ever so interested, and fiending (fanging?) for more.

To all at DC/Vertigo: long days and pleasant nights.

Thank you all,
Kevin "Coldas" Mattice
Vancouver, BC, Canada

Thanks for writing, Kevin. Great to hear from you! Seems like not only has AMERICAN VAMPIRE made it across the pond, but our friends in the north are reading too! That's great. Let me address some of your points: 1. Regarding variants. We will probably do some more variant covers down the road for the right moment (like a big anniversary issue, or start of a new storyline) and when we get the right talent lined up. As I'm sure you'll agree—we've had some pretty stellar artists on AV, don't want the quality to drop! 2. So glad you enjoyed Mateus on issues 10 and 11, but don't worry, Rafael is not going anywhere. As you can see, he's back, kicking ass on our current storyline. That's the format for this book: big story arcs by Rafael, then smaller stories that deepen the characters and background of the mythology drawn by other excellent artists, then back to Rafael on the big arcs. Good plan, right?

I think that's it. Oh, and "long days and pleasant nights," eh? Well, to that, I can only say one thing: thankee-sai.

Hey, Mark,

So I'm a huge fan of AMERICAN VAMPIRE! I love it so much that I want to get a tattoo of it on my lower back! The comic kicks ass, and I was wondering if Rafa could do a sketch for my tattoo? I would love for it to be his stuff! If he can, lemme know!

Never let this comic end!

Sincerely,

Tyler Jirik
Newmarket, ONTARIO

Wow, Tyler, what a cool idea! Well, let me see what Rafael can do for you. The only thing we would ask in return is that you send us a picture of your awesome tattoo so we can run it in the letters column here.

As for never letting the comic end, well, I can't say that, because there is an end to this tale. ALL great Vertigo series must come to an end. But I don't want you to worry, because the end is way, way down the road. Scott and Rafael have a ton of great ideas. Why, just today I was on the phone talking to Scott and...what's that, Joe? Ladies and gentlemen, Assistant Editor Joe Hughes! <applause!> You're saying I can't talk about that stuff yet? But it's going to be so good! All right, all right. Joe is right, I don't want to spoil things for you fine folks. But trust me. You guys are going to flip...

That's it. Next month, the Ghost War rages on!

--Mark

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www.dclatterspage.com

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Letters to the Editor

DC Comics

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New York, NY 10019

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AMERICAN VAMPIRE # 17



VERTIGO

SUBMIT YOUR LETTERS TO:
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THE HOTLIST



AMERICAN VAMPIRE: SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST #1

From the pages of the red-hot Vertigo series comes a five-issue spinoff miniseries!

It's World War II in Nazi-occupied Romania as vampire hunters Felicia Book and Cash McCogan (last seen in the critically acclaimed AMERICAN VAMPIRE story "Devil in the Sand") go behind enemy lines with the secret organization known as the Vassals of the Morningstar in search of a rumored vampire cure. But their haunted, twisted past with Skinner Sweet makes the mission more difficult than they imagined.

Superstar artist Sean Murphy (JOE THE BARBARIAN) joins Scott Snyder to tell a story of horror and history, expanding the American Vampire mythology in a way that changes this series forever.



WE3 DELUXE EDITION

For the first time in hardcover, a powerful tale from the ALL-STAR SUPERMAN team of Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely!

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With nervous systems amplified to match their terrifying exoskeletons, the members of Animal Weapon 3 (WE3) have the firepower of a battalion. But as prototypes, they're slated to be permanently "decommissioned" after their testing is complete, causing them to make a desperate run for freedom. Relentlessly pursued by their makers, WE3 must navigate a frightening world where their heightened abilities make them as much a threat as those hunting them – but a world in which they must find a home.

This amazing oversized hardcover features new story pages by Morrison and Quitely.

AMERICAN VAMPIRE #16
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #38
ZOMBIE #14
NORTHLANDERS #41
PREACHER BOOK 4
SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING BOOK 5
SCALPED #50
STUCK RUBBER BABY
SWEET TOOTH #22
SWEET TOOTH VOL. 3: ANIMAL ARMIES
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06.11
THE HIT LIST

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ON THE

LE DGE

The OUTSIDE JOB

Hello. It's been 50 issues of SCALPED. Just seeing the number itself brings me a smile, no matter how "professionally cool" one should act. So it's a good time to share one confession... or maybe two...

For starters, my real name isn't GUÉRA and it's not even GÉRA (as it should be). Here's why:

When I was about eleven or twelve, we moved from one part of Belgrade (I grew up in what is now Serbia, but was then Yugoslavia) to another, so I changed schools. Being new, I had to remember lots of names, and one of them, I remembered wrong. It was the name "Gruya" (Montenegrin name, not average sounding even by Serbian standards), but I somehow heard it wrong and thought that this kid's name was "Gera" and so called him by it. All of the kids secretly laughed at this, and to keep the joke going, nobody told me for some days. I spotted my error and changed, but 'twas too late, and they all started calling me "Gera." So that's how it stuck ever since. It's not a pen name or anything like that... even my mother calls me Gera! And after I moved to Barcelona in the early '90s it evolved from the Serbian - Gera, to Guera, as I was really tired of explaining to the Spanish here how it should sound, as they were pronouncing it Dart-Wader like (ha, ha) I added this one letter and an accent just to change the word. I am not sure I succeeded, but it made my life a lot simpler.

Why am I confessing this? If only to explain to you that everything I draw, write, play, live... it flows directly from the brain (and heart) of a Serbian raised in Yugoslavia emigrated to Barcelona and speaking to you in English... so please do allow for "the feel" of it.

Maybe all these layers of experience help explain the wide range of work I've done: I've worked on comics of almost all types. Comics for France, Spain, America, comics for kids about horses, samurai comics and I even did one for a bank - so a long, varied career as a comics professional.

Being inside of the craft of comics for so long gives you confidence because you learn some things... like you know a good script when you see one; you know that the second read of any script is decisive; you know how to upload it to your imagination to make it yours; you know how to let yourself be impacted in order to do all those drawings (sometimes endless, sometimes the first one saying it all); you know when your editor is saving your ass by questioning something from afar; you know that the clarity of the early morning hours promises the best ideas and work... oh, so many things. It's all clear, so I suppose you'd think the "inside" of the process is the best place to be.

Well... maybe... that brings me to SCALPED... and to my second confession:

SCALPED is still a mystery to me.

I fooled myself that I'll be "inside" it just by my talent. My cherished "storytelling skills" put to good use. But with each new issue - as each new story was told - it remained a mystery (as it in fact had been from the beginning). All my answers just brought more questions, month after month after month. Like some hundred-year-old seaman who knows all knots and rigging, but still shivers with excitement each time he looks out at the open sea. At the "thickness" of the deep. At the mystery of it.

Well, OK...

I know I can't measure it, I suppose I'm too close. But I finally understood. I learned by it. As with any other hidden treasure - it's about the price to pay. In order to let the reader be inside of SCALPED, the authors must move out of the way - must stay outside. I won the treasure, so now it's about sharing. The one who makes cocktails has to stay sober. The paradox of it is the exact space where the mystery lies...

It's been a great ride and even though it's been nearly six years, I somehow woke me up in the middle of the night and said I've only been doing SCALPED for six months, I'd believe it. That's how intensely right doing these pages feels to me. So BIG thanks to all of you insiders of SCALPED for giving us strength to stay outsiders. We couldn't be rewarded better.

And to my teammates: Jason, Gula, Jack, Mark and Will - just do stay healthy. As for the rest - I don't worry. Let's go outside.

R.M. Guéra

R.M. GUÉRA is a Serbian comic book author and illustrator. He debuted in the Yugoslav comic book industry in 1982 with the series *Elmer Jones* and has worked on many titles since, including *Texas Riders* and *Le Lièvre de Mars*. He currently lives in Barcelona, Spain.

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